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12 May 1988

MEMO FOR: ~~SECRET~~

SUBJECT: Possible SNIE on Soviet Unilateral Force Cuts

I think this is a needed effort. I recommend inclusion of two aspects as yet uncovered by your key questions and outline.

First, the estimate must cover the internal political struggle that would inevitably attend (or is currently attending) any Soviet decision on a unilateral force cut, whether the motivation be economic, military, or political-diplomatic. The issue of unilateralism in arms control or reduction has already become something of a political macho test within the Soviet leadership, with Gorbachev's apparent partisans seeking to develop the rationale for it and the military, presumably with conservative political backing, against it. My guess is that Gorbachev does not have the political clout necessary for such a move at present; he may or may not come out of the current round of political infighting with such power. But this is something the estimate must clearly address.

Second, without delving into a detailed statement of our collection posture (which the DO would rightly object to), I think the estimate should record a judgment as to how much "warning" of a Soviet decision or announcement we might expect to get. With all the blather that glasnost has generated, we might get a fair degree of warning.

Let me make a couple of suggestions about the approach. I think the SNIE ought to be very short. Clearly it must be based on assessments the full explication of which could be very lengthy, i.e., a) how Gorbachev might see the Soviet economy profiting from unilateral force cuts, and b) how Soviet security requirements might, with appropriate adjustments, still be met. These should not be contained in the estimate but published elsewhere and summarized in the estimate. If they don't now exist, they've got to be done. Furthermore, I believe strongly that the substance of the problem should be argued through in a series of conferences and briefings involving the authoritative analysts and agency reps before somebody sits down to draft the SNIE. If the substance of this project, including disagreements about it, is collectively understood, the SNIE could be drafted on a weekend.

*Fritz Ermarth*  
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C/NIE

cc: VC/NIC, NIOs/USSR, EUR, ECON, SP, DIR/AG

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